

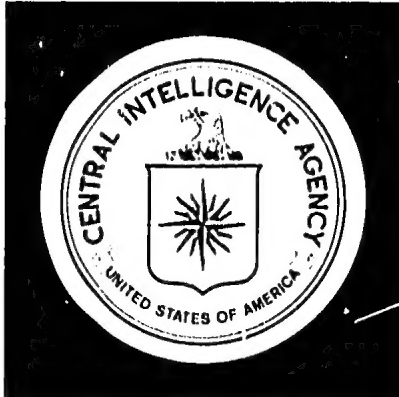
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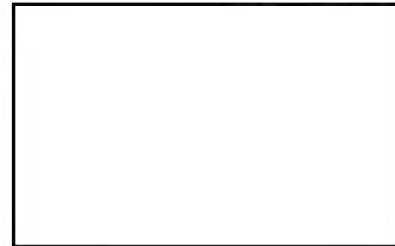
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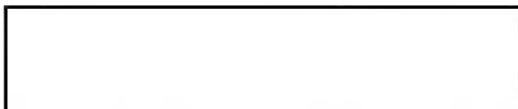
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Developments in Indochina

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DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA

(Information as of 1500)

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is extensive truck movement across the Cambodian border into Binh Long Province. The Communists are having problems making the transition from military to political warfare.

LAOS

3

Government troops have moved into an area near Khong Sedone nominally under government control at the time of the cease-fire.

CAMBODIA

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The government is making some progress on Route 2. There is confusion about possible preconditions in the new election proposal.

The government intends to ban anti-government demonstrations in Phnom Penh.

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SOUTH VIETNAM

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The Military Situation

Numerous truck convoys moving into Loc Ninh District have reportedly been sighted by South Vietnamese aerial reconnaissance of the Binh Long Province - Cambodian border region during the past few days. Some of the trucks were towing AAA guns and heavy artillery, and South Vietnamese military sources estimate that the Communists are moving 35 to 40 tons of supplies daily into storage areas in Tay Ninh and Binh Duong provinces. In northern South Vietnam, aerial photography of Quang Tri Province shows stacks of supplies at Con Thien, just south of the DMZ. Loaded trucks were also detected at Cam Lo farther east.

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Communist Problems Conducting Political Struggle

The Communists appear to be having some problems in making a transition from military to political warfare.

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[redacted] an assessment of its activities during February that cadre and party members have been "desultory" in following the guidance put forth by COSVN in late January concerning the "political struggle." The assessment further noted that the cadre understanding of the COSVN directive is "incomplete" and that "little progress" has been made in developing Viet Cong political assets.

The "key problems," according to the assessment, are that the cadre have failed to adjust to the new situation, that they remain distant from the masses, and that the legal infrastructure is weak. The days ahead are likely to be full of "complexities and difficulties," according to the committee. The political struggle will not be completed quickly, and it may be necessary "at times" to attack with main forces, but the Communists will then resume political negotiations.

The study, prepared as a guideline for district and village committees, declared that the party [redacted] should strengthen its political forces and proselyting among government elements. It also stressed motivating and organizing the people, and encouraging them to demonstrate and petition for freedom of movement, war damage compensation, and the right to return to their former homes. Communist units should take up positions in fringe areas near government zones in order to try to link these areas with the Viet Cong's "liberated" zones.

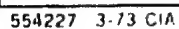
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The assessment also cautioned cadre not to move in force into government areas and not to destroy property, lest "mere rumors" of Communist forces entering a hamlet cause the residents to evacuate.

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LAOS

The Military Situation

In the south, government troops, aided by air strikes on 14 March drove a small Communist force from a village some 20 miles northeast of Khong Sedone. The operation appears designed to re-establish a presence in an area nominally under Vientiane's control at the time of the cease-fire.

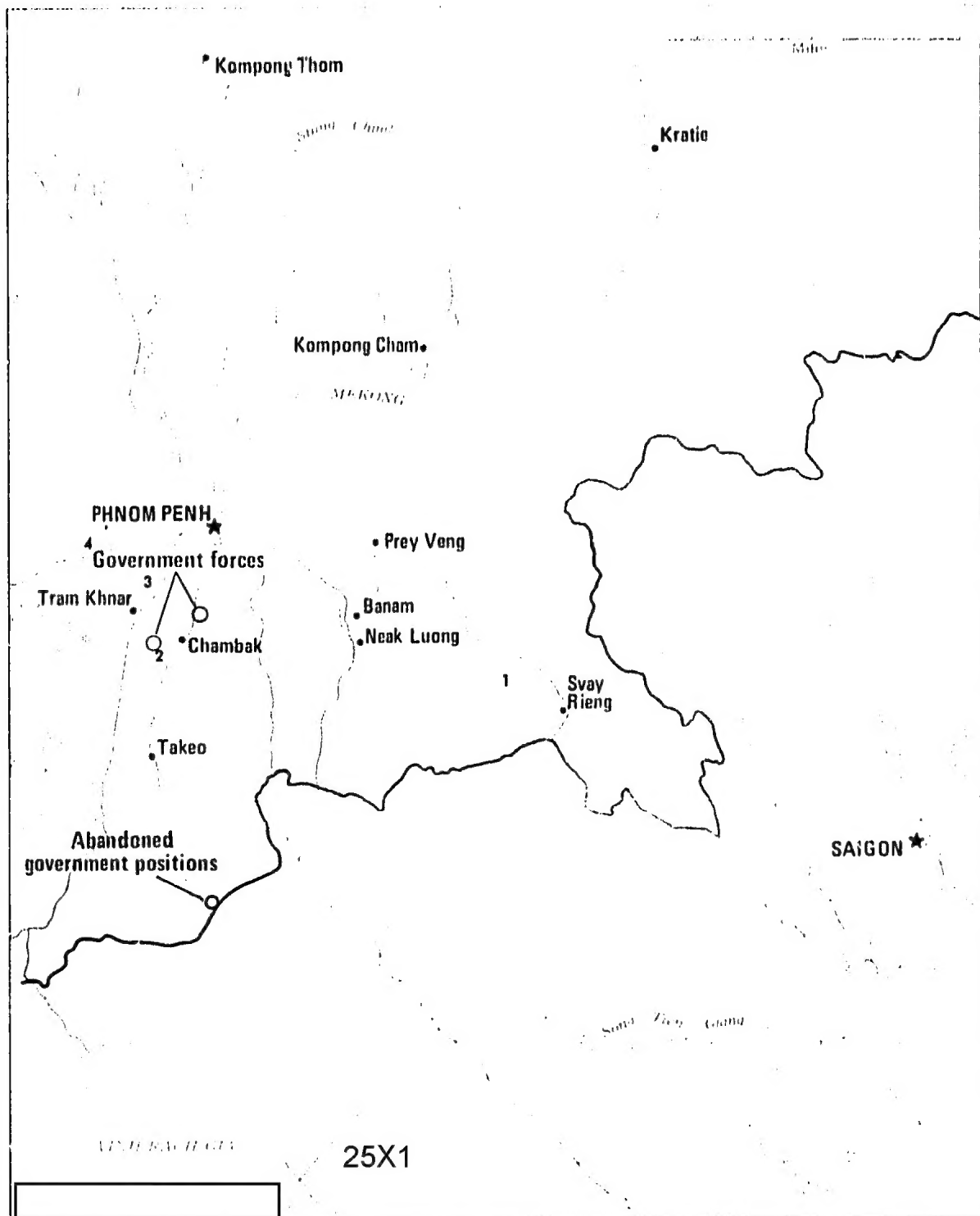
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In the north, skirmishing near Route 4 southeast of the Plaine des Jarres died down on 14 March.

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CAMBODIAThe Military Situation

Government operations to regain control of Route 2 between Phnom Penh and the town of Takeo are making some progress. Cambodian units headed south along the highway from the capital have now advanced to within eight miles of the insurgent-held town of Chambak. At last report, they were encountering only light resistance. The government troops are being supported by heavy US air strikes. Another multi-battalion force moving on Chambak from the west is now within five miles of the town. South of Takeo, however, the Communists still have the upper hand. Government troops abandoned three more positions near the South Vietnamese border on 13 March. [REDACTED]

More on Elections

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There seems to be some confusion within the government over whether Lon Nol's statement on 12 March about new elections carries any preconditions. Information Minister Keam Reth told the press on 14 March "it is contemplated" that the elections would be held only after a cease-fire and after "foreign troops" were withdrawn under the supervision of the International Control Commission. A later statement by the official government news agency said that the government does not insist on the signing of a formal cease-fire as a prior condition to new elections, but that they could not be held unless the fighting stops.

Regardless of the discrepancy, the new proposal is essentially the same as the one floated in early February, and probably will be no more appealing to the insurgents. [REDACTED]

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Demonstrations Banned

The government has issued a provisional order--pending promulgation of a law--prohibiting anti-government demonstrations in Phnom Penh. The order requires organizers of any demonstration to file an application giving their names and such other details as the date, time, purpose, and type of demonstration. It appears to be aimed at heading off a threatened protest by striking teachers now set for 17 March and at preventing possible student demonstrations.

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